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SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [IR](#)

SUBJECT: IRAN: SUSPICIOUS DEATH OF DETAINEE ABUSE WITNESS REIGNITES
CRITICISM

CLASSIFIED BY: Alan Eyre, Director, Iran Regional Presence
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REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)

[¶1.](#) (C) SUMMARY: The suspicious death of a 26-year old doctor assigned to a notorious detention facility during the aftermath of the government's crackdown on election protest has refocused attention on detainee abuse and the lengths to which the regime will go to suppress criticism of its behavior. After initially hypothesizing the twenty-six year old doctor had died of a heart attack while sleeping in government barracks, criticism prompted judicial officials to declare Ramin Pourandarjani's death was under investigation. A November 18 statement by the head of Iran's Law Enforcement Forces attributing the death to suicide due to depression has unleashed a new storm of criticism among oppositionists. END SUMMARY.

[¶2.](#) (C) Oppositionist websites, led by a site associated with Mehdi Karrubi, first brought attention to the death of Ramin Pourandarjani, a twenty-six year old doctor stationed at Kahrizak Detention Facility over the summer. Kahrizak was closed in late July by direct order of Supreme Leader Khamenei after becoming a lightning rod for public criticism of the mistreatment of demonstrators arrested in the post-election unrest. Several detainees, including Mohsen Ruholamini - the son of a prominent conservative whose death at Kahrizak sparked an outcry among regime insiders - are thought to have died at Kahrizak as a result of wounds sustained at the facility.

[¶3.](#) (C) Many of the facts surrounding Pourandarjani's death remain unclear and contradictory facts have been reported in both the Iranian and international press. There appears to be consensus that Pourandarjani was found dead by his roommates on November 10 in his dormitory at the medical department of the Tehran Police. According to statements by Law Enforcement Officials, Pourandarjani, a medical doctor, was working at Kahrizak one or two days per week fulfilling his mandatory military service; this posting coincided with the influx of post-election detainees to Kahrizak and reports on opposition websites maintain Pourandarjani told them he witnessed mistreatment of detainees at the hands of guards. Some reports also indicate that he testified about what he witnessed before a special Majlis commission investigating prisoner abuse, while other reports said he unsuccessfully attempted to meet with committee members.

[¶4.](#) (C) Initial IRIG statements attributed Pourandarjani's death to a heart attack, an assertion met with immediate skepticism

due to the doctor's young age, good health, and knowledge of medical issues. On November 16 the Tehran Public and Revolutionary Prosecutor's office announced that it would investigate Pourandarjani's death, after a preliminary coroner's report indicated he had not been poisoned. Yet on November 18 the head of Iran's Law Enforcement Forces (LEF) told reporters that the young doctor "likely committed suicide" because of depression. According to General Ahmadi-Moghaddam, Pourandarjani had been previously been summoned to court to "explain" his actions at Kahrizak and was as a result depressed and afraid of imprisonment. The LEF Commander said that the rumors that Pourandarjani had been imprisoned for a week, harshly interrogated, and threatened with five years in prison if he persisted in talking about his experiences at Kahrizak as "lies conceived by foreign agents." Fars News, closely associated with the Revolutionary Guards, alleged November 19 that many of Pourandarjani's friends believed he committed suicide out of remorse for his own actions at Kahrizak, insinuating the young doctor has been complicit in the mistreatment of detainees rather than trying to expose the actions of others.

15. (C) COMMENT: The regime's clumsy attempt to explain away Pourandarjani's death are reminiscent of past cases, including that of Zahra Kazemi, the Canadian-Iranian photojournalist beaten to death in custody in 2003. If, as all indications suggest, the government killed Pourandarjani to either prevent additional testimony about its brutality or punish him for his temerity in speaking about the issue, it is yet another instance of official intolerance for criticism and a brutal reminder for would-be critics of the party line. END COMMENT.

EYRE